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THE OAK TREE / AND PADDY AMONG THE TULIPS

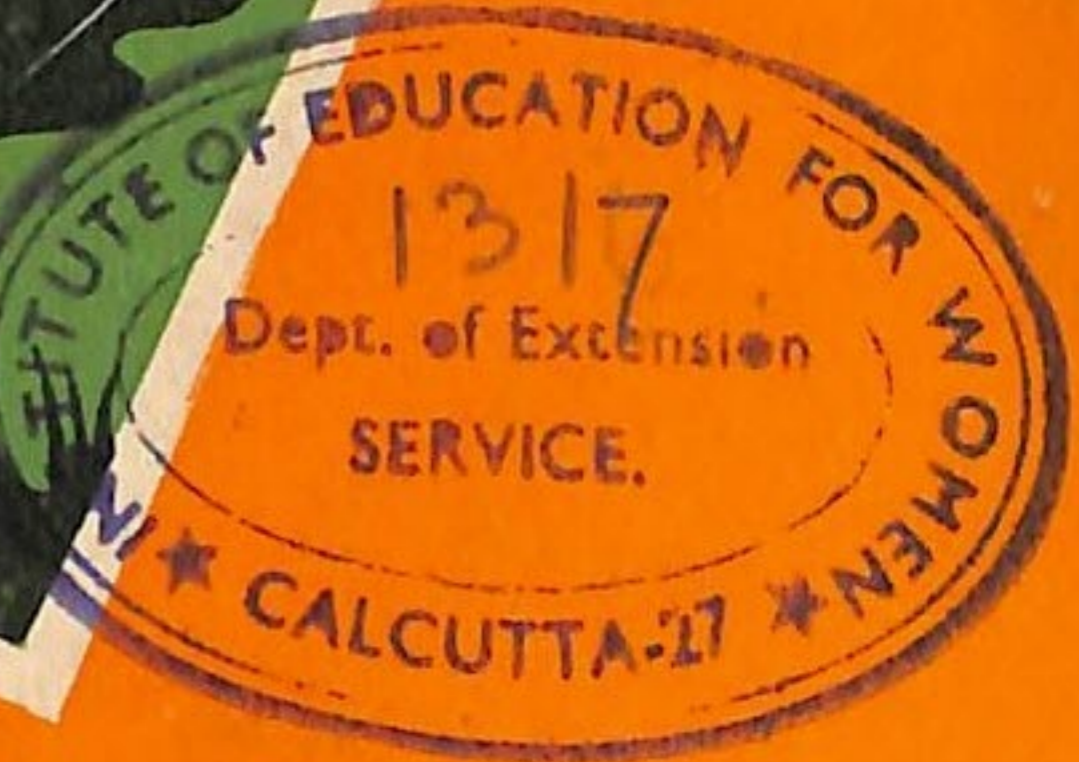


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By

KATE LAY



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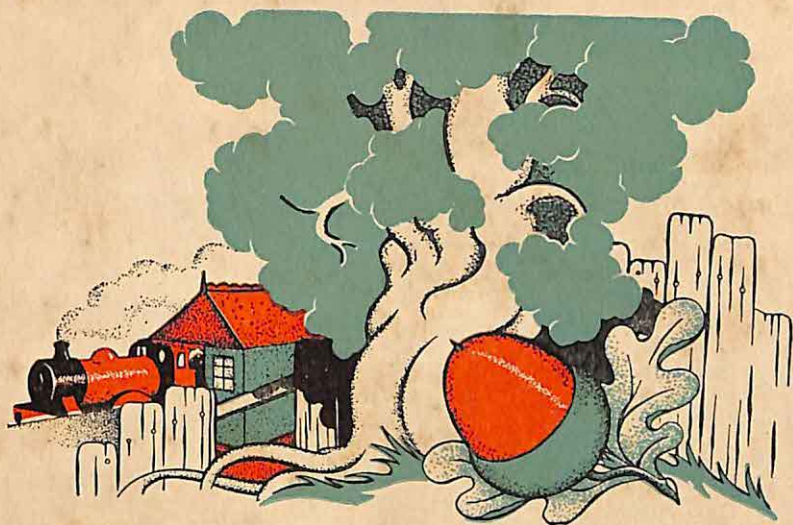
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THE OAK TREE

Once there was a fine, fat acorn. The picture shows what a fine fellow he was. His mother, the oak tree, was proud of him, for he was the only child she had had that year. She, poor thing, stood in a dirty yard by the railway, where she was

blackened by the smoke and scorched by the sparks from the engines.

"If ever you have the chance to leave this yard," said the oak tree to her one acorn, "you take it. This is the worst place in the world for a tree, and besides, there is not room for both of us. I only wish I could get you into the green fields where my mother lived. Then you would grow into a proper tree, shapely and beautiful, and have many little acorns of your own."

The acorn listened to his mother's words as he lay on the ground below.

"If I could only reach one of those trains," he thought. "Perhaps they would take me to the green fields my mother talks about."



However, there seemed no way for a little acorn to reach the trains as they thundered by, so he lay still among the old tins and rubbish.

One day a boy came wandering through the yard and spied the acorn.

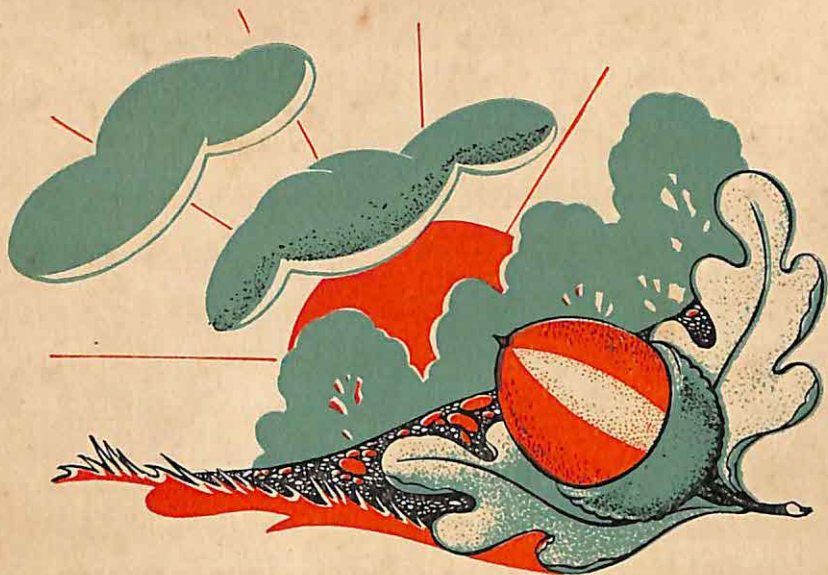
“Hullo! Here’s a find!” he cried, and he put the acorn in his pocket.

It happened that not many days after that, there was the children's annual school-treat into the country. The boy went, and the acorn went too—in the boy's pocket.

The children all took the train to a country station, bound for a wood where they could gather sweet chestnuts. They filled their pockets and hats with chestnuts and sat down on a log in a sunny field to eat some. When the boy emptied his pockets he found the acorn at the bottom.

"This is of no use to eat," he said, and he threw the acorn as far as it would go.

So the acorn found himself in a green field, just as his mother had wished for him. He lay on the damp



earth and looked all around at the waving grass and at the blue sky above.

“If only my mother could see me now,” thought the acorn, “how happy she would be!”

The rain fell, the sun shone, the days came and went, and soon the little acorn split his skin.

"Now I am beginning to grow," he said to himself. "I shall be a proper tree, too, shapely and beautiful, and have little acorns of my own."

The farmer's fat pig came by, nosing the ground. He saw the acorn lying there and made for him with a grunt.

"Oh! please do not eat me!" cried the acorn. "I have come such a long way to find this field. If you will let me stay, I promise that I will give all my acorns to feed your grandchildren."

"Grumph!" said the pig. "Very well. Only mind you keep your promise." And he trotted off.

So the acorn was left alone, and he joyfully sent a little root into the



ground. Soon he sent up a green shoot into the air, and in this way he became a sturdy seedling.

A brown cow strolled by, cropping the grass. She came up to the seedling and opened her big mouth.

“Oh! please do not eat me!” cried the seedling. “I have come such a long way to find this field. If you will let me stay, I promise that I will

make a fine shade for your grandchildren."

"Moo!" said the cow. "Very well. Only mind you keep your promise." And the cow roamed away, leaving the seedling to grow.

Grow he did, as hard and as quickly as he could. He sent down stout roots bearing tiny hairs to take up the moisture in the soil, and shot up green leaves to breathe in the fresh air and sunshine.

When the young oak tree was nearly two feet high, the farmer's boy, with a little girl, passed by, hand in hand.

"Look!" cried the boy. "Here is a baby oak tree. Let us take it home and plant it in a flower-pot."



“Oh! please do not move me!” cried the young oak tree. “I have come such a long way to find this field. If you will let me stay I promise that when I am old my wood shall make handsome furniture for your grandchildren.”

The boy and girl laughed merrily at this.

“Very well,” they said. “Only

mind you keep your promise." And they ran away, laughing still.

So the baby oak tree waxed tall and strong, till it grew into a fine little tree in the middle of the field.

"How pleased my mother would be to see me now!" he thought.

Still he grew and grew, and soon he bore his first crop of acorns. The pigs came grunting round the foot of the tree.

"Have you any acorns for us?" they asked.

"Take them all," said the young oak tree. "They are yours. I promised them to your grandfather when I was an acorn."

Still the oak tree grew, sending out fine branches with clustering



leaves. On fine days the cows came and gathered round the tree.

“May we shelter in your shade?” asked the cows.

“Come under my branches and take all the shade you want. It is yours. I promised it to your grandmother when I was a seedling,” answered the oak tree.

The years rolled by, and the oak tree was the finest and largest in the countryside. Then the farmer began to build a house for himself in the field. He came to look over the tree.

"I'm afraid I must cut you down, my fine fellow," said the farmer.

"Take me," answered the old oak tree. "My wood is yours. I promised it to your grandparents when I was a stripling."

So the farmer cut down the oak tree and, being a handy man, he made of the wood a kitchen table and three chairs for his new home.

"What a wonderful life I have had!" said the oak tree, as the farmer plied his axe. "All that my mother wished for me has come true. I have



lived in a green field and have been a proper tree, stately and beautiful. I have fed the pigs and sheltered the cows. Now I can look forward to a peaceful old age as handsome furniture.”

So saying, the oak tree fell with a crash to the ground, and was never heard to speak again.

PADDY AMONG THE TULIPS

In Holland, the land of the Dutch people, a poor man and his wife lived in a tiny cottage. They had only one small field, on which they worked every day. Each year the Dutchman planted the field with tulip-bulbs. In the spring, when the flowers were nearly open, he gathered them and sold them in the market. In the autumn he dug up the bulbs and packed them in bags and boxes to send to England.

This couple had two children, a boy, named Jan, and a girl, named Gretchen. The children went to a village school a mile away from their home.



One afternoon, at tulip time, Jan and Gretchen were walking home from school along a high bank called a dike that led by their father's field. As they passed the field, they stopped to look at the tulips. The flowers were just opening. They spread away from the dike like a beautiful carpet coloured in yellow, red and pink stripes.

"Father is going to start picking to-morrow," said Jan. "I hope there will be no heavy rain to-night to knock down the flowers. They are better than ever this year."

"Yes," answered Gretchen. "Mother says we should be very poor this summer if the tulips were spoilt."

"Poorer than ever! That would be dreadful," said Jan. Then he walked on. "Come along, Gretchen, I want my tea. Let's run."

But Gretchen was staring at a far corner of the field, where the carpet of flowers was waving about as if the wind was blowing.

"Look, Jan, look!" she cried, pointing to a place where the tulips were bending, now this way, now that.



“What is it?” asked Jan.

“There’s someone among the tulips!” cried Gretchen. “They are all moving about! Oh! oh! he’s knocking them down!”

In a moment Jan had slipped off his satchel and had scrambled down the dike into the field.

“I’ll stop him,” he shouted.

Gretchen climbed down after him,

and they both raced across the field.

Suddenly Gretchen stopped. "Jan!" she called. "Stop!"

She was taller than Jan, so she could see farther into the field, and what she saw frightened her terribly. It was a big animal, as large as the largest dog. It was bounding over the tulips, breaking and bending them. What frightened Gretchen most was that she felt sure she had seen an animal like this before. Suddenly she remembered. It was a wolf! There was a picture of a wolf in one of her books, and it was just like this animal. The long head, the pointed ears—yes, there was no mistake.

"What's the matter?" asked Jan, stopping to look at her.



“It’s not a man!” gasped Gretchen.
“It’s—it’s—a *wolf*!”

“A what?” asked Jan.

“A wolf. A grey wolf. Oh, Jan, come back! Come back!” she wailed.

“Silly! We don’t have wolves in Holland. You learn about them only at school,” said Jan.

"But it *is* a wolf! I saw it! Oh, do come back!" pleaded Gretchen.

"I don't care what it is. I am going to save Father's tulips." And Jan turned and went on into the field.

Gretchen was so frightened that she ran back to the dike and climbed up it. Standing up, she could see Jan's hat bobbing among the flowers. She waited, trembling, to get another look at the wolf. Suddenly it jumped out of the flowers, quite close to Jan's bobbing head. Gretchen did not wait to see any more. Giving a shriek, she turned and ran towards home. In her flight she did not see a tall man walking towards her on the dike. She ran straight into him.

"Well, Gretchen!" said the tall



man. And Gretchen looked up to find her father.

“Father!” she cried. “Jan’s fighting a wolf!”

“Fighting a wolf! What do you mean?” asked her father, thinking it must be some new game.

“In the field!” she sobbed.

“In my tulip field?” said her father anxiously.

Just then Jan came along at the bottom of the dike. He was holding the grey animal by the collar.

"Here, Father," he called. "See who was spoiling your tulips."

"What? A dog among my beautiful tulips!" cried the Dutchman.

"Oh, is it a dog?" said Gretchen, getting ready to run away again.

"Yes. An English dog. Here is the name on his collar: 'Paddy, Robinson, Park Lane, London,'" said Jan, reading it out.

"He knocked down a big patch of tulips over there before I caught him," said Jan, scrambling up the dike to the others.

"Thank you, Jan. That was brave of you. Run along home to tea now,"

replied his father. And he walked away with Paddy, while the children ran home to tell their mother.

That night there was a heavy fall of rain, which spoilt more of the poor Dutchman's tulips, so that he had only a very few to send to market the next day. Jan and Gretchen

went to mind the stall, as it was Saturday. They took Paddy with them, and tied him to a leg of



the stall, hoping that his owner would come and claim him.

They were feeling very sad, for they had few flowers to sell, and bulbs flower only once, so that there was no hope of any more money till the bulbs were sold in the autumn.

Suddenly Paddy, who had been lying quietly by them, got up, and began to pull at his leash.

"Be quiet, Paddy," said Jan.

But Paddy would not be quiet. He pulled and tugged, wagged his tail, and gave short, sharp barks. A gentleman then came round by the stall.

"Will you buy some flowers, sir?" said Gretchen.

But the gentleman was looking at



Paddy. "Bless my soul, it's Paddy!" he cried. And the dog jumped up and licked his face.

The man wore blue, well-cut clothes, and spoke Dutch strangely.

"It's Mr. Robinson," whispered Jan to Gretchen. "I am sure he's an Englishman." Then he asked, "Is he your dog, sir?"

"Yes, he is my prize Alsatian," replied the gentleman. "There is a reward of fifty pounds offered for him. Who found him?"

"Jan did," said Gretchen.

"But you saw him first," said Jan truthfully.

"You caught him," replied Gretchen.

"Well, then, you had better divide the money between you," said Mr. Robinson.

"Money?" said Jan. "Oh, no, sir, we don't want any money. Only Paddy knocked down some of my father's tulips. Perhaps you would pay him for those?"

"And the rain spoilt some others," added Gretchen, "so he hasn't much to sell this spring, you see."



“I will give him the reward money if you will give me the rest of the tulips. It will pay him more than double for the whole field,” said the gentleman, handing to Jan a note for fifty pounds.

“Oh, thank you, sir!” cried Jan.

“Send the flowers to the Grand Hotel, where I am staying,” said Mr.

Robinson. Then, untying Paddy, he led him away.

"Good-bye, little friends," he called. "I am very grateful to you for finding Paddy."

"Good-bye!" cried Jan and Gretchen.

Then, without waiting any more, they ran all the way home to tell their father what had happened.

How pleased the Dutchman was when he heard the story! With the fifty pounds he was able to buy another field and grow more tulips. He also put a big fence round his fields to make sure that no more animals could get in and spoil his tulips again. He never became a rich man, but he was never so poor as he had been before Paddy ran among his tulips.

EXERCISES

THE OAK TREE

1. Tell how the acorn found its way into the country.
2. What did the acorn promise the pig and the cow?
3. Tell what happened to the oak tree in the end.

PADDY AMONG THE TULIPS

1. Tell why Jan and Gretchen were so upset when they saw something was breaking the tulips.
2. How did the children get the money to pay for the spoilt tulips?

LIST OF SERIES B.

- 1B. JENNY AND THE OLD HORSE
and ANOTHER OLD HORSE.
- 2B. JENNY IN THE BULL'S FIELD
and JENNY IN THE BLACKBERRY PIT.
- 3B. JENNY AND THE SWALLOWS.
- 4B. ALICE AND THE WHITE RABBIT
and OTHER STORIES.
- 5B. ALICE AND THE DEAR LITTLE PUPPY
and OTHER STORIES.
- 6B. ALICE AND THE MAD TEA-PARTY
and OTHER STORIES.
- 7B. THE OAK TREE and PADDY AMONG THE TULIPS.
- 8B. THE MAGIC WALKING-STICK
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- 9B. WILLIAM THE KITTEN
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- 12B. THE VEGETABLE PIE
and THE RABBITS' CHRISTMAS PARTY.
- 13B. JACOB'S BIRTHDAY BREAKFAST
and THE MILKMAID.
- 14B. WHO LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG?
and HOW THE WOOD-PIGEON BUILT HER NEST.
- 15B. THE SILVER FISH and THE STOWAWAY.
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